U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Frequently Asked Questions About

Bull Trout Draft Recovery Plan

for Columbia River Basin, Klamath River Basin and St.Mary-Belly River Distinct Population Segments

What is recovery?
Recovery is the process by which the decline of an endangered or threatened species is arrested or reversed, and threats neutralized so that its survival in the wild can be ensured. The goal of the Endangered Species Act is the recovery of listed species to levels where protection under the Act is no longer necessary.

What is included in the draft recovery plan released today?
The draft recovery plan includes an introductory chapter outlining the overall plan for recovering bull trout throughout its range in the United States, describing the steps needed to recover bull trout in the Columbia River Basin, the Klamath River Basin and the St. Mary-Belly River Basin. There are 24 chapters in this recovery plan and each chapter is specific to a recovery unit. Each recovery unit covers a geographic area, such as a watershed or a collection of streams. Each of the recovery unit chapters can be thought of as a "mini-recovery plan" that contributes to and is consistent with the overall recovery plan.

Why is the draft recovery plan organized this way?
Because the bull trout population segments occur over a large five-state area, and population segments were listed for protection at different times, a two-tiered approach to developing the draft recovery plan was adopted. The first tier addresses broad aspects of bull trout recovery at the level of recovery across the range of the species. The second tier addresses recovery in smaller areas, such as specific river basin areas or collections of streams within each of the three distinct population segments. These are the recovery units.

Today's announcement includes the draft recovery plan for the Columbia River Basin, Klamath River Basin and St. Mary-Belly River Basin population segments. For purposes of recovery planning, these segments were divided into 24 recovery units. These recovery units are:

Recovery Unit	Distinct Population Segment	State(s)
Klamath River	Klamath River	Oregon
Clark Fork River	Columbia River	Idaho, Montana, Washington
Kootenai River	Columbia River	Idaho, Montana
Willamette River	Columbia River	Oregon
Hood River	Columbia River	Oregon
Deschutes River	Columbia River	Oregon
Odell Lake	Columbia River	Oregon
John Day River	Columbia River	Oregon
Umatilla-Walla Walla rivers	Columbia River	Oregon, Washington

Grande Ronde River	Columbia River	Oregon
Imnaha-Snake rivers	Columbia River	Idaho, Oregon
Hells Canyon Complex	Columbia River	Idaho, Oregon
Malheur River	Columbia River	Oregon
Coeur d'Alene Lake Basin	Columbia River	Idaho
Clearwater River	Columbia River	Idaho
Salmon River	Columbia River	Idaho
Southwest Idaho	Columbia River	Idaho
Little Lost River	Columbia River	Idaho
Lower Columbia River	Columbia River	Washington
Middle Columbia River	Columbia River	Washington
Upper Columbia River	Columbia River	Washington
Northeast Washington	Columbia River	Washington
Snake River, Washington	Columbia River	Washington
St. Mary-Belly River	St. Mary-Belly River	Montana

Are there other bull trout recovery units?
There are three other bull trout recovery units. Draft recovery chapters for them will be released in October 2003. They are:

Recovery Unit	Distinct Population Segment	State (s)
Jarbidge River	Jarbidge River	Idaho, Nevada
Puget Sound	Coastal-Puget Sound	Washington
Olympic Peninsula	Coastal-Puget Sound	Washington

Who developed the draft bull trout recovery plan?
The draft recovery plan for bull trout was developed through the collaboration of federal, state, tribal and private biologists working with representatives of local watersheds, private landowners and industry and conservation organizations. A total of 24 local recovery unit teams contributed to the development of the draft recovery plans for each of the recovery units. These recovery unit teams included experts in biology, hydrology and forestry, as well as natural resource users and stakeholders with interest and knowledge of bull trout and the habitats they depend on for survival. In all, 127 stakeholders participated, in addition to Federal, State and Tribal biologists and policy managers, in developing the draft recovery plan chapters released today.

How was the draft recovery plan for each unit developed?
Recovery units were delineated based on the biology of the species -- for example, groupings of bull trout with historical or current gene flow -- and integrates state conservation and fisheries management frameworks wherever possible.

Focusing recovery on smaller areas, such as the recovery units, is advantageous because bull trout are widely distributed and their habitat and the factors affecting them vary greatly throughout their distribution. A more local scope allows recovery tasks to be tailored to specific areas and encourages implementation of tasks by local interests. The recovery units are largely based on watersheds and river basins, in addition to biology, and incorporate existing state plans as much as possible.

What is the relationship between the draft recovery plan and the critical habitat proposal?
The draft recovery plan and the critical habitat proposal are closely linked. The information developed by the recovery unit teams, and the science underlying that information, are the basis for the critical habitat proposals. However, critical habitat is designed to provide for the conservation of a species by identifying those areas essential for conservation and requiring special management, whereas a recovery plan is a much larger blueprint for the recovery and eventual de-listing of a species, as it provides recommendations concerning habitat and various other factors that need to be addressed to achieve recovery.

Who would be affected by recovery efforts and a critical habitat designation?
A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority. It represents the Fish and Wildlife Service's estimation of actions necessary for the recovery of the species.

The primary effect of a critical habitat designation is that federal agencies are required to consult with the Fish and Wildilfe Service on actions they carry out, fund, or authorize that might affect critical habitat. It is important to note that in most cases, consultation is already occurring under the section 7 interagency consultation requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Non-federal entities, including private landowners, that may be affected by a critical habitat designation could include, for example, those seeking a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit under the Clean Water Act to build an in-water structure, those seeking federal approval to discharge effluent into the aquatic environment, or those seeking federal funding to implement land management practices, where such actions affect the aquatic environment that has been designated as critical habitat. But again, in most cases where this link between activities on private lands and Federal funding, permitting, or authorization exists, consultation under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act is already occurring.

A critical habitat designation does not have any effect on non-federal entities when there is not a federal nexus. For example, swimming, boating, fishing, farming, ranching, or any of a range of activities normally conducted by a landowner or operator of a business not involving federal funding, permitting, or authorization would not be affected.

What are the recovery objectives?
To recover bull trout, the following four objectives have been identified:

- Maintain current distribution of bull trout within core areas as described in recovery unit chapters and restore distribution where recommended in recovery unit chapters. (See the individual recovery unit summaries for more details.)
- Maintain stable or increasing trends in abundance of bull trout.
- Restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for all bull trout life history stages and strategies.
- Conserve genetic diversity and provide opportunity for genetic exchange.

What are the criteria for assessing whether recovery objectives are being achieved?
Criteria specific to each recovery unit are defined in that recovery unit chapter. However, every recovery unit chapter will contain criteria that address the following four objectives:

- The **distribution of bull trout** in identified and potential local populations in all core areas within the recovery unit.
- The **estimated abundance of adult bull trout** within core areas in the recovery unit,

expressed as either a point estimate or a range of individuals.
- The **presence of stable or increasing trends** for adult bull trout abundance in the recovery unit.
- The **restoration of passage** at specific barriers identified as inhibiting recovery.

What actions will be needed to achieve recovery?
Recovery tasks are detailed in each recovery unit chapter. However, recovery tasks in each unit will address the following seven categories:
- Protect, restore and maintain suitable habitat conditions for bull trout.
- Prevent and reduce negative effects of non-native fish and other non-native species on bull trout.
- Establish fisheries management goals and objectives compatible with bull trout recovery and implement practices to achieve goals.
- Characterize, conserve and monitor genetic diversity and gene flow among local populations of bull trout.
- Conduct research and monitoring to implement and evaluate bull trout recovery activities, consistent with an adaptive management approach using feedback from implemented, site-specific recovery tasks.
- Use all available conservation programs and regulations to protect and conserve bull trout and bull trout habitats.
- Assess the implementation of bull trout recovery by recovery unit and revise recovery unit plans based on evaluations.

How long will it take to recover bull trout?
A recovery plan is advisory only and carries no regulatory authority; therefore it is difficult to determine how long it will take to recover bull trout. Individual recovery units have different needs and will be recovered at different rates. However, if the actions in the recovery plan are all implemented, we estimate it could take 15 to 25 years, or more, to recover bull trout.

How much will recovery cost?
Estimating the cost of recovery is difficult and complex, due to many variables and unknowns. However, the Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that the recovery of bull trout throughout their range could cost about $500 million spread over 25 years. This includes estimates of expenditures by local, Tribal, State and Federal governments and by private business and individuals. The estimates are attributed to bull trout conservation but other aquatic species also will benefit. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is soliciting comments from the public on potential costs.

How can private landowners have a role in recovery?
The Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to enhancing opportunities for private (non-Federal) landowners to participate in the conservation of listed and imperiled species. One example is the "Safe Harbor" program, which provides regulatory assurances to non-Federal landowners who voluntarily implement measures that contribute to the conservation of listed species on their lands. These Safe Harbor Agreements eliminate landowners' concern that restoring habitat and allowing the return of listed species to their property might result in future land-use restrictions under the ESA. The Fish and Wildlife Service also offers grants for endangered species conservation and recovery. Working with our State partners, the Fish and Wildlife Service awarded approximately $106 million in Federal funding in Fiscal Year 2002 under five types of endangered species grants. **[For more information on our grant programs, please see our grants web page at http://endangered.fws.gov/grants.]**

How can I obtain copies of the recovery plan and other documents?
The documents, along with maps, fact sheets, photographs and other materials may be found on the Pacific Region's website at http://species.fws.gov/bulltrout.

How can I comment?
A 90-day public comment period for the draft recovery plan began November 29, 2002, and closes February 27, 2003. Comments may be mailed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Snake River Basin Office, Attn: Supervisor, 1387 S. Vinnell Way, Room 368, Boise, ID 83709; faxed to 208-378-5262, or sent via e-mail to fw1srbocomment@fws.gov.

The 60-day public comment period for the critical habitat proposal opened November 29, 2002, and closes January 28, 2003. Written comments may be sent to John Young, Bull Trout Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 911 NE 11th Street, Portland, OR 97232; faxed to John Young at 503-231-6243, or sent via e-mail to R1BullTroutCH@r1.fws.gov.

In January 2003, you will be able to submit formal oral testimony on the critical habitat proposal during public hearings and submit written comments on both the critical habitat proposal and the draft recovery plan at information meetings. They are scheduled at the following times and locations:

January 6: Challis, Idaho
Custer County Courthouse (Commissioners Room)
801 Main Street
Information meeting 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

January 7: Salmon, Idaho
Salmon Valley Center
200 Main Street
Information meeting 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 7: Polson, Montana
KwaTaqNuq Resort
303 U.S. Highway 93
Informational meeting 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 7: Wenatchee, Washington
West Coast Wenatchee Center Hotel
201 North Wenatchee Avenue
Information meeting 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 8: Missoula, Montana
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Information meeting 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

January 9: Spokane, Washington
West Coast Grand Hotel
303 West North River Drive
Information meeting 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 9: Lewiston, Idaho
Red Lion Hotel
621 21st Street
Information meeting 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 9: Bend, Oregon
Central Oregon Community College
2600 NW College Way
Information meeting 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 13: Vancouver, Washington
Water Resources Education Center
Bruce E. Hagenson Community Room
4600 SE Columbia Way
Information meeting 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 13: Yakima, Washington
Yakima Convention Center
10 North 8th Avenue
Information meeting 6 pm. to 8 p.m.

January 14: Eugene, Oregon
Hilton Eugene & Conference Center
66 East 6th Avenue
Information meeting 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Public hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 14: Boise, Idaho
AmeriTel Inn/Boise Spectrum
7499 West Overland Road
Information meeting 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 14: Kalispell, Montana
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Headquarters
490 North Meridian Road
Information meeting 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

January 15: Sandpoint, Idaho
The City Forum
418 North 3rd Avenue
Information meeting 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 16: Libby, Montana
U.S. Forest Service Building
1101 Highway 2 West
Information meeting 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

January 16: Pendleton, Oregon
Red Lion Hotel
304 SE Nye
Information meeting 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 22: Klamath Falls, Oregon
Shilo Inn
2500 Almond Street
Information meeting 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Hearing 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

January 28: LaGrande, Oregon
Blue Mountain Conference Center
401 12th Street
Information meeting 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses nearly 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.